Child labourers in the country

488. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that around 44 million child labourers are in India ;

(b) if so, whether despite Government's efforts to free the children from bonded labour the children are forcibly asked to work; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take in this regard to free children from bondage in the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI RADHAKRISHAN MALAVIYA) : (a) The estimated number of child workers in the age group 5-14 years in the country in 1986, worked out on the basis of the National sample Survey (38th round) and the population figures as projected by the Expert Committee on Population Projections was 16·7 million.

(b) and (c) it is a statutory obligation of the State Governments under the bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, to release any bonded labourers (children or adults) as soon as they are identified. Further, to supplement the efforts of the State Governments in regard to identification and release of bonded labour, the Central Government has with effect from 30-10-1987 launched a plan scheme for the involvement of voluntary agencies in the task of identification and rehabilitation of bonded labour.

Closure of newspapers due to hike in the prices of newsprint

489. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL:
SHRI N. E. BALARAM:
SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that due to hike in the price of newsprint, several small and medium newspapers are likely to be closed down in the country;

(b) if so, whether the Indian federation of Small and Medium Newspapers has also urged Government to reduce the price of newsprint;

(c) if so, the reaction of Government in this regard; and

(d) steps Government propose to take to save the small and medium newspapers in the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (PROF. K. K. TEWARY) : (a) No such report has been received by the Government.

(b) to (d) The Government have received representations for reduction in the prices of the newsprint. The Central Government do not exercise any statutory control on the prices of newsprint and it has not been found possible to reduce the prices. However, appreciating the difficulties of small and medium newspapers Government have in addition to existing concessions decided to extend 100% concession in customs duty for glazed newsprint in and 50% exemption from customs duty in the case of medium newspapers (periodicals) entitled to the